

There are nine RC&D areas in Alabama. NRCS administers the program, providing a coordinator and administrative support. A local council of citizens sets the priorities.

This past year, 198 local projects were completed at a cost of more than \$8 million. Nine councils received a total of \$750,000 from the general fund budget.

**Outreach**

The Alabama Outreach Program recognizes that the participation of under-served customers is part of the way NRCS does business. However, in helping communities and groups, we find that traditional methods of promoting programs sometimes do not reach the under-served customer due to economic, cultural, social, and other barriers. To ensure that the under-served customer has access to information about programs, NRCS helps secure grants and enters into agreements with community-based organizations and educational institutions. The funds generated by these grants and agreements are used to teach the under-served customer how to obtain and use the technical assistance provided by NRCS and other sources. In FY2001, NRCS provided assistance to 29,546 minority customers.

**Conservation Education**

With financial support from the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee, NRCS sought the assistance of Dr. Doug Phillips, who hosts the Alabama Public Television Program—Discovering Alabama, to develop a “Soils of Alabama” video. The video will be aired as a part of the Discovering Alabama series and will be available to school systems and the general public. The “Soils of Alabama” video will serve as a tool to help raise the awareness of the significance of the soil as a valuable natural resource.

**Cost-Share Programs**

NRCS provides technical assistance to all 1996 Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act Programs (1996 Farm Bill). Many state agencies or non-profit organizations request NRCS technical assistance for conservation cost-share programs. NRCS administers the financial assistance for these programs except EQIP, CRP, and WRP, which are funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation.

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

This voluntary conservation program addresses serious threats to soil, water, and related natural resources through 5 to 10 year contracts. There are 50 priority areas

in Alabama. In FY2001, there were 650 conservation plans/ contracts prepared on over 156,000 acres. Fifty percent of Alabama EQIP funds went to manage animal waste and improve water quality, twenty-two percent to reduce erosion, and twenty-eight percent to improve grazing. EQIP provides geographically targeted technical, financial, and educational assistance to maximize environmental benefits.

**Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)**

The state had good participation in FIP in FY2001. Over 600 landowners applied for funding which totaled over \$2.8 million. NRCS was able to fund 337 contracts for a cost-share value of \$1,083,505. Forestry practices were applied by 250 landowners. Nearly 6.5 million trees were planted on over 10,000 acres and timber stand improvement practices were applied on nearly 1,700 acres.

Tree planting is needed on several million acres of forest land in the state and another 500,000 acres of openland could be planted to trees. Forest stand improvement is needed on over 1 million acres of forest land.

**Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)**

This voluntary program helps people develop and enhance habitat for fish and wildlife on private lands. WHIP provides both technical assistance and cost-share funds through 10-year contracts. During FY2001, NRCS funded 50 contracts for a total of \$162,789. Over 210 WHIP contracts are currently active in the State of Alabama.

**Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**

NRCS plays a very important role in CRP. NRCS staff provided technical assistance to landowners interested in enrolling land in CRP by helping them process bids, develop conservation plans, and establish permanent vegetation on environmentally sensitive cropland. In this voluntary program, landowners sign 10 to 15 year contracts and receive annual rental payments. Alabama currently has 479,990 acres enrolled in CRP with 121,921 acres in the continuous CRP. To date, 479,990 acres are covered by over 9,766 conservation planning contracts. There are 1,600 conservation plans/contracts expected in continuous CRP.

**Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)**

This program assists landowners that voluntarily restore and protect wetlands on private property by offering options of permanent easements, 30-year easements, and 10-year restoration cost-share agreements. Alabama has filed 13 WRP easements, including five perpetual and eight 30-year easements.

# 2001 Alabama Annual Report

## Natural Resources Conservation Service Activities

*“A thin layer of earth, a few inches of rain, and a blanket of air make human life possible on our planet....These essential resources must be available to provide the good life for our children and future generations.”*

*--John F. Kennedy  
(1917-1963)  
35th President of the United States*

Photo: Bucks Pocket,  
Jackson/Dekalb Counties, AL

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United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS

Natural Resources Conservation Service

P.O. Box 311  
3381 Skyway Drive  
Auburn, Alabama 36830  
334-887-4535

Dear Fellow Conservationists:

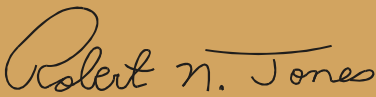
The conservation accomplishments in Alabama during the past year have been significant. I proudly present this 2001 USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Annual Report.

Alabama is blessed with a bountiful and diverse array of natural resources. They are major contributors to our quality of life in the state. Conservation of our natural resources doesn't happen by chance. Private landowners make the investments that preserve, protect, and enhance these resources. All of us reap the benefits of their conservation and stewardship ethic.

The beautiful and productive landscape of our state is a product of landowner commitment and assistance from a broadbased conservation partnership. Our federal, state, and local conservation partnership consists of NRCS, Alabama Association of Conservation Districts, Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee, and the Alabama Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils. This partnership is firm in its commitment to locally led, voluntary activities as the most effective way to help landowners and communities achieve their conservation goals.

I appreciate the NRCS and conservation district employees, conservation partnership members, and private landowners who are committed to conservation activities that benefit all the citizens of Alabama.

Sincerely,



ROBERT N. JONES, State Conservationist

**NRCS Mission**  
To provide leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, improve, and sustain our natural resources and environment.

**NRCS Vision**  
Harmony between people and the land.

## A Customer and an Advocate

Charles Holmes is steeped in conservation culture. His ancestor, William Moore, homesteaded 40 acres in Perry County near Marion, Alabama, in 1819 (the sheepskin deed bears the signature of Andrew Jackson). Since then, the homestead has grown into thousands of acres. Charles, the fifth generation descendant of William Moore, is still carrying on the stewardship of the land that his ancestor started.

Charles' father, A. D. Holmes, and his two uncles, J. C. and Charles Webb, planted the first "seeds" of conservation and stewardship of the land within his mind. Charles served an apprenticeship under these two uncles; upon their death, he took the lead in operating the family farm.

As a member of the Perry County Soil and Water Conservation District Board, Charles knows the value of the technical assistance provided by NRCS. He has used various programs of the Agency to improve water quality on his property. He installed fences to keep the cattle out of the stream; established a grazing management system; provided fresh water for the cattle;



installed filter strips, buffers, and treatment for critical erosion areas; and stabilized drainage ways.

Charles is not only a customer of NRCS, he is also an advocate for the Agency. Since 1988, Charles has served as the Alabama representative on the National Association of Conservation District (NACD) Board. Charles states that he bases his NACD decisions on the Board's two guiding principles:

- 1) Speaking to the Washington delegates as one voice for conservation,
- 2) Providing technical assistance to cooperators.

Through his work with NACD, Charles has been successful in bringing the conservation districts to the forefront of recognition and prominence as a network of dedicated and capable common sense conservationists within our state.

When asked why he is dedicated to conservation, Charles stated, "I believe in what my forefathers did—using the land according to its capacity and treating the land according to its need."

**NRCS** employees serve all 67 counties from 56 field offices across the state. Fifty-five district conservationists lead the NRCS team within each of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Staffs are comprised of resource and soil conservationists, engineers, soil scientists, soil conservation and engineering technicians, and water management specialists. These employees work hand-in-hand with land users to conserve natural resources on private lands.

## Program Summary

This annual report covers the fiscal year from October 1, 2000, to September 30, 2001. The following are highlights of our activities.

### Small Watershed Program

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954, Public Law 83-566 (Small Watershed Program) allows NRCS to join with local people to help plan and install projects that increase flood protection, control erosion, and enhance water quality, water supply, and water-related recreation.

During FY2001, NRCS signed contracts for one floodwater retardation structure and one channel restoration project. In addition, eight new long-term contracts (LTC's) were written for the Sand Mountain-Lake Guntersville area.

NRCS obligated more than \$350,000 to the Small Watershed Program during FY2001.

### Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

When a major disaster such as a tornado, hurricane, ice storm, or flood occurs at the local level, NRCS provides recovery assistance to protect fixed improvements from threats caused by watershed impairments.

Almost \$30 million has been made available to Alabama through the EWP program during the past four years. Assistance is authorized by sections of Public Laws 81-516, 94-334, and 104-127.

During FY2001, NRCS obligated \$3,552,000 in Alabama for EWP projects resulting from heavy rainstorms in March and April. Local sponsors for these events included 25 county commissions and city governments. More than 150 sites will be protected using these EWP funds. An additional request for \$1 million to address damages from Tropical Storm Allison has been submitted for funding.

### Soil Survey Program

Modern soil survey reports are available in 35 of the 67 counties in Alabama. Interim reports are completed and awaiting publication for four counties (Choctaw, Marengo, Pickens, and Russell). Mapping is complete in three counties (Barbour, Hale, and Macon) and one special project (Fort McClellan). The maps are being compiled and the manuscripts are being written and edited for those counties. Field mapping continues in four on-going survey

projects (Clarke, Coosa, Crenshaw, and Tallapoosa Counties), one update project (Houston County), and two special projects (Redstone Arsenal and Anniston Army Depot). Five counties (Bibb, Lamar, Lowndes, Washington, and Winston) have not yet been mapped. Sixteen counties have out-of-date or out-of-print surveys.

Marengo and Pickens Counties are digitally map finished and awaiting publication. Choctaw and Russell Counties are in the process of being digitally map finished. Digital layers (hydrology and cultural) are being reviewed and edited for Macon County in preparation for digital map finishing. Marengo is one of the first counties to have soils data available on CD-ROM.

Nineteen soil surveys in Alabama are Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) Data Base certified, meeting all standards and specifications as described in the NRCS National Soil Survey Handbook, and are available in digital format. Coffee, Covington, Dale, and Geneva Counties are in the certification process. Three counties (Baldwin, Mobile, and Montgomery) are to be compiled and digitized in 2002. Map compilation, in preparation for digitizing and SSURGO certification, will begin on DeKalb, Etowah, and Marshall Counties in 2002.

### Private Grazing Land Assistance

NRCS is a member of the Alabama Forage and Grassland Coalition that promotes forage quality and grazing management. The Coalition has sponsored grazing schools and a forage conference to teach grazing management. During FY2001, more than 80 people attended two sessions of the grazing school.

### Conservation Tillage

Conservation tillage, defined as 30 percent residue cover after planting, is the cornerstone of conservation systems in Alabama. The number of farmers using this practice continues to increase as they observe the success of their neighbors when using this environmentally friendly practice. The number of cotton and peanut farmers using conservation tillage increased significantly during FY2001. The benefits of conservation tillage include reduced soil erosion, moisture retention, and savings in time and money invested in the crop.

### Conservation Buffers

During FY2001, Alabama landusers installed 16,000 acres of conservation buffers in grass and trees. These buffers will help improve or maintain water quality in nearby lakes and streams. Riparian forest and filter strips make up most of the acres. Alabama landowners are doing their part to reach the NRCS national goal of two million acres of buffers by 2002.

### Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Program

RC&D is a unique USDA program that helps rural areas promote wise use of natural resources, improve communities, and stimulate economic development.